

He unhappily belied this noble profession by his later utterances, and about 1540-41 signed the judgment of the Wittenberg theologians in favour of the execution of Anabaptists, adding that, although it seemed cruel to punish them with the sword for their beliefs, it was more cruel to permit them to damn the ministry of the Word and suppress right teaching with impunity. The efficacy of such a dictum is only too sadly endorsed by the fact that up to 1530 about two thousand of these sectaries had been put to death in the various German States. During the next decade Anabaptism discredited itself by the excesses of Miinster, but Miinster did not truly represent the opinions or morals of the large body of dissenters to whom this name was applied. Bucer had the charity and the sagacity to discern between the tares and the wheat in the Anabaptist field, and Bucer, Blarer, and Philip of Hesse deserve the credit of seeking to win them to the orthodox Protestant Church by means of persuasion and instruction. Melancthon and Luther were far less discriminating, and only too ready to exemplify at the expense of such sectaries the persecuting principles which the Catholics would fain have exemplified at theirs. The death penalty alone could avenge such doctrinal aberrations, and the death penalty was carried out against some of them by the elector in deference to Melancthon's dictum that "it is necessary to enforce the most rigorous penalties against the obstinate, and although some few may not be malicious folk, the pernicious sect must be suppressed." Against Anti-Trinitarians, like Campanus, and, later, Socinus, the theological rabies was equally violent.

Dogmatic intolerance increased rather than abated after the Religious Peace of Augsburg. The compression of liberty begun by the reformers begat a tendency to contention and bigotry, which lamed the vitality of Lutheranism and prepared the way for an inevitable rationalist reaction. The principle that Scripture is the test of doctrine might be good as against the absolutist dicta of pope and hierarchy. But the tendency to subordinate reason to Scripture led equally to, a mechanical dogmatism. The tyranny of the mediaeval system returned in the scholastic Protestant theology. The feud between Lutheran and Calvinist raged onward with increasing bitter-